

## Anti-Bullying Week Campaign by Muslim Mind Collaborative

Muslim Mind Collaborative, a membership organisation which helps to educate and inform colleagues from a range of sectors, for the benefit of Muslim mental wellbeing, are launching a key resource this Anti-Bullying Week, which coincides with Islamophobia Awareness Month (IAM). IAM works to shed a light on pervasive anti-Muslim prejudice. Official Home Office figures show that last year, 42% of religious hate crime was directed at Muslims, against a 26% increase in hate crime.<sup>1</sup>

Surveys into attitudes, approaches and impressions of Islam in the UK follow a similar trend - research suggests that the level of hostility Muslims face is greater than other minority groups, as evidenced in a report published in 2017, in which 70% of research respondents said that they thought that most White British people would mind if a close relative married a Muslim and 44% of respondents said they would mind themselves. The latter figure being more than double compared to other identified ethnic minority groups.<sup>2</sup> These statistics soberingly mirror the lived-experience of British Muslims, with a more recent report from the EHRC finding that 70% of Muslims said they had specifically experienced religion-based prejudice.<sup>3</sup> This racism is both a strain on mental wellbeing and an impediment when it comes to seeking help.

For young Muslims – who make up 1 in 12 students in British schools, these issues carry a salience. We know that prejudice in wider society can be mirrored in schools, and that there is already a growing mental health pandemic amongst young Brits.

MMC's *Identifying Islamophobic Bullying poster* aims to educate young people on the causes and dangers of Islamophobic bullying and signpost them to help, while also aiding schools to establish an environment where it is not tolerated. This poster is the first in a series of resources aimed at young Muslims' mental health in schools. To get involved, or join Muslim Mind Collaborative contact: [Sabah.gilani@bcbn.org.uk](mailto:Sabah.gilani@bcbn.org.uk)

Muslims make up 8.1% of all school age children (5 to 15 years old), with variations in parts of the country with a high local Muslim population such as the London Boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham where respectively nearly two thirds (65.8%), or a half (44.1%) of children of school age are of Muslim background. This means, for anti-bullying week, a focus on religious prejudice felt by school aged Muslim children is of increasing relevance.

Against wider social attitudes towards Muslims, it is important to educate young Muslims on what is considered unacceptable prejudice against Muslims and their religion. A report by the Citizens UK Commission on Islam, Participation & Public Life also found that "More than half of Britons (56%) now regard Islam – the religion generally, as distinct from Islamic extremists – as a threat to the UK".

Polls on differing age groups suggest an upward trend in religion-based prejudice against younger Muslims,<sup>4</sup> including an ICM poll undertaken in 2015 that found that Muslims feel religious prejudice

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<sup>1</sup> [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022)

<sup>2</sup> Nancy Kelley, Omar Khan, Sarah Sharrock, "Racial prejudice in Britain today", NatCen Social Research, September 2017, p. 7. [http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1488132/racial-prejudice-report\\_v4.pdf](http://natcen.ac.uk/media/1488132/racial-prejudice-report_v4.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Abrams, D., Swift, H., and D. Houston. 2018. Developing a national barometer of prejudice and discrimination in Britain. Equality and Human Rights Commission. p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Kully Kaur-Ballagan, Roger Mortimore and Glenn Gottfried, A review of survey research on Muslims in Britain. Ipsos Mori, 21 March 2018  
BBC ComRes 2015

is increasing over time.<sup>5</sup> The most recent Government statistics show a stark increase in religious hate crimes of 37% in the last year.<sup>6</sup> We know that young people are influenced by the views of those around them, so an increase in anti-Muslim prejudice in wider society means a likely increase in schools.

The role schools play in championing inclusivity and acceptance, and supporting, nurturing and protecting children and young people's identity cannot be overstated. MMC's information poster is designed for educational settings and aimed primarily at students, and identifies Islamophobic bullying and signposts children and young people to services that can support them through any potential instances of it. A resource of this nature can help to:

- Provide information, support and reassurance to anyone that may be suffering from Islamophobic bullying, and details of where to seek help
- Establish a clear definition for Islamophobic bullying in educational settings
- Help to create a culture in which this prejudice is unequivocally called out as unacceptable
- Destigmatise Muslim children and young people's identity and culture
- Start dialogue and conversation regarding acceptable and unacceptable forms of speech and behaviour
- Educate wider pupils, staff and families on the features and harms of Islamophobic bullying
- Create more supportive environments for Muslim children

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<sup>5</sup> ICM Survey of Muslims for Channel 4: interviews with 1,081 Muslims aged 18+, conducted face-to-face across Great Britain on 25 April-31 May 2015, and with a nationally-representative control group of 1,008 adults aged 18+ by telephone on 5-7 June 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Home Office: Hate Crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022 [Hate crime, England and Wales, 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97422/hate-crime-england-and-wales-2021-to-2022.pdf)